

Planning Information Center Census Data Bulletin

RHODE ISLAND
STATEWIDE
PLANNING
PROGRAM



Rhode Island Division of Planning
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Aging in Rhode Island

From health care to retirement, the interests of older Rhode Island residents affect decisions and investments across the state. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, 151,881 residents 65 years of age and older live in Rhode Island, which represents 14.4% of the population. This proportion is greater than the national share of residents 65 and older, 13.0% (up from 12.4% in 2000), and slightly larger than that of the Northeast region, 14.1 %.

A Demographic Profile

The age 65 has lost some of its significance as a life marker in the United States because many Americans are working past traditional retirement age. According to American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates, in Rhode Island, 15.1 percent of adults age 65 and older are part of the civilian labor force, which includes 1.2 percent who are unemployed (it does not include those who have given up looking for a job, or who retired due to a layoff).

Costs of housing and health care are major concerns for senior citizens in Rhode Island, many of whom have fixed incomes. Nearly half (47.4%) of residents 65 and older receive retirement income, at a mean \$20,500 per year, and 91.1% receive Social Security income, providing a mean \$17,181 in income. One in five adults age 65 and older has an income below 150% of the federal poverty standard; this is a major concern for providing housing and health care to older adults.

Rhode Island residents 65 and older are not a homogenous group. According to 2010 ACS estimates,

BY THE NUMBERS

151,881 R.I. residents over 65 in 2010

-0.34% change since 2000

46.1% change since 1970

\$16,335 mean Social Security income

31.6% living in rentals

Source: Census 2010; 2010 American Community Survey

18.9% speak a language other than English at home, and 20,158 were born in another country. Of those, 84.6% entered the United States before 1990. Additionally, one in four Rhode Island adults over 65 is a veteran.

Negative Growth for Now

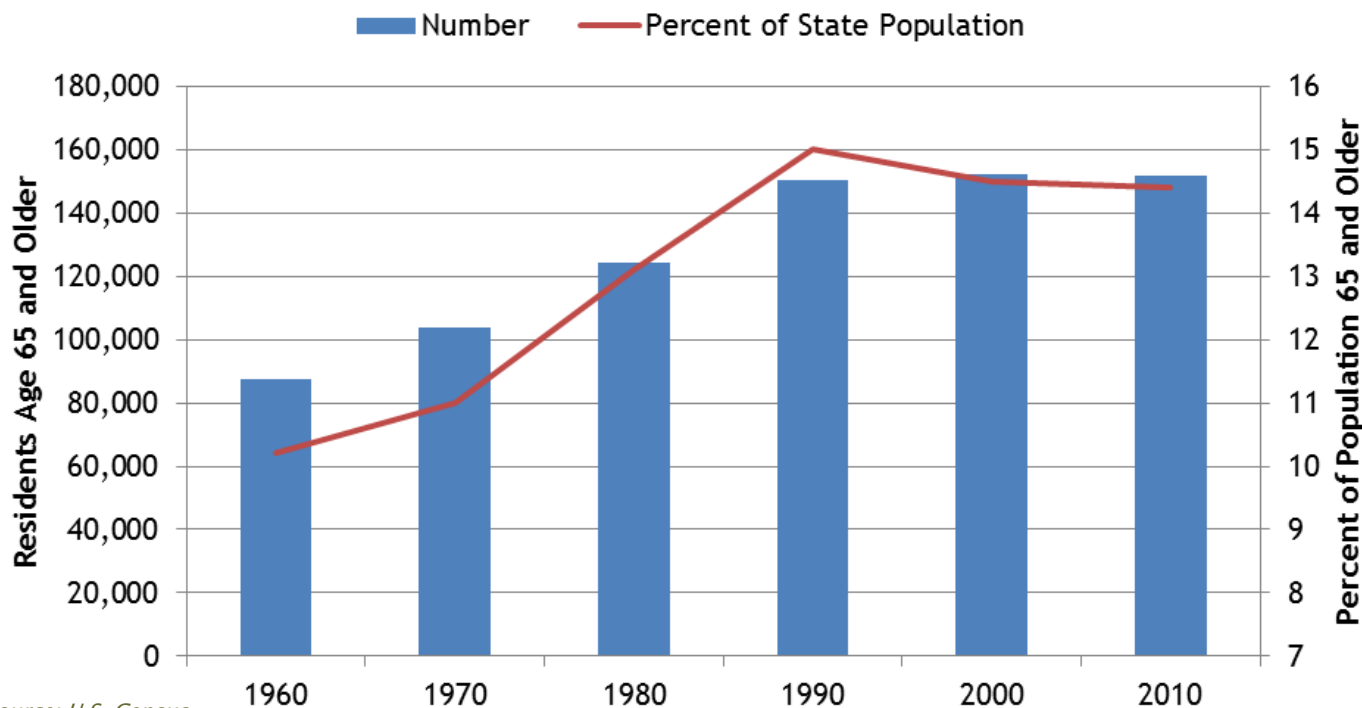
Although Rhode Island has a large proportion of older residents, it is the only state in the nation with a negative growth rate, albeit quite small, for adults 65 and older over the past decade. (In 2000, Rhode Island counted 152,402 residents 65 and older, 14.5% of the population.) What accounts for stagnation of the state's older population despite regional and national growth?

The data show that a drop in residents age 70 to 79 drove the decline. Several factors might account for this trend; some experts point to low fertility rates in the 1930s that resulted in fewer individuals overall in this age group. Others believe that the sluggish Rhode Island economy in the 1980s and 1990s discouraged working age adults from moving to or staying in the state at that time, which translates to fewer older adults now. Of course, older adults who moved to other states may also have contributed to the slight decline.

ABOUT THE DATA

Data in this Bulletin are drawn from Census 2010 and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2010 one-year estimates, both administered by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Decennial Census counts every individual in the country once every 10 years, while the ACS collects surveys from a sample of residents on a year-round basis and generates *estimates* of population characteristics. For this reason, the ACS lists a margin of error for each estimate, which corresponds with a 90 percent confidence level; that is, there is a 90 percent chance that the true count is within the margin of error of the estimate. While there is no universal standard, a general rule of thumb is that reliable estimates have a margin of error no larger than one quarter of the estimate itself. All the ACS estimates in this bulletin fall under this threshold.

Rhode Island's 65+ Population, 1960-2010



Source: U.S. Census

Expected Growth in the Future

Despite the small loss of older adults, Rhode Island should expect to host a growing population of older adults in upcoming decades. The first baby boomers are reaching 65, and both life expectancy and median age have been on the rise in the United States for decades.

Housing for an Aging Population

Rhode Island will need to continue to provide suitable housing for a growing older population, which is one of the major planning implications of this demographic trend. Census 2010 reports that of cities and towns in Rhode Island, Providence has the largest number of residents age 65 and older, 15,504 in 2010, but this number accounts for just 8.7% of the population, tied with Central Falls for the lowest percentage in the state (universities and colleges tend to bring down the relative share of older adults). Warwick has the next greatest population of residents 65 and older, 14,144 (17.1%) according to Census 2010, with Cranston next at 12,305 (15.3%). Cities and towns with greatest proportions of older adults are mostly smaller municipalities; as of 2010, 22.7 percent of Little Compton's residents and 21.3 percent

of New Shoreham's tiny population are over 65.

Across the state, two-thirds of the older population lives in owner-occupied housing and one-third in renter-occupied housing, according to 2010 ACS estimates. Nearly half of older adults who pay rent spend over 30% of their household income in housing expense, and about 40% of those who pay ownership costs do so too. These statistics are similar to those of the general population. Additionally, 8,104 or 5.3% of adults age 65 and over live in group quarters, most of whom live in nursing facilities.

TO LEARN MORE...

Detailed analysis of the state's older population is available in the May 2010 report, *Rhode Island Aging Profile*, at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/census/elderly.pdf> (written before Census 2010 data was released).

For additional information about Rhode Island's population, visit the U.S. Census website, *American FactFinder*, at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

For further information about Planning Information Center resources, contact Vincent Flood at Rhode Island Statewide Planning: vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov or (401) 222-1243.